

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 TRSE-00 IO-10 OMB-01 SAM-01 SAJ-01

ACDA-05 EB-07 COME-00 SIL-01 LAB-04 CIAE-00 PM-03

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2703

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 2551

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: GOP OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION

REFS: (A) LISBON 2471; (B) LISBON 2510

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT'S CHIEF OF CABINET, FERREIRA DA CUNHA, SAID APRIL 25 ELECTIONS WERE MASSIVE REJECTION OF COMMUNISTS AND WOULD SERVE TO LEGITIMIZE THE PRESENT COALITION PARTIES, ESPECIALLY THE PPD AND THE PS. MDP WAS EXPOSED AS A NON-PARTY WHOSE INFLUENCE WAS ALREADY DIMINISHING. CUNHA SAID PS MAY DAY PROBLEMS WERE OBVIOUS PROVOCATION BY COMMUNISTS, AND PCP HAD OVERPLAYED HAND. UNITARY LABOR LAW STILL CALLS FOR A UNION ELECTION, AND SOCIALISTS WILL WIN THESE ELECTIONS. CUNHA NOTED THAT SOCIALIST-AFM PERSONAL RELATIONS WERE STILL BAD. END SUMMARY.

1. HAD HOUR AND HALF DISCUSSION EVENING MAY 5 WITH
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COL. FERREIRA DA CUNHA, CHIEF OF CABINET TO PRESIDENT

COSTA GOMES. MAIN TOPICS: CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION
AND ANGOLA.

2. ELECTIONS: CLEARLY ELATED AT THE OUTCOME OF THE
APRIL 25 ELECTIONS, CUNHA CALLED THEM "A POLITICAL
CONVULSION." SAID THAT THE VOTE SHOWED SUCH OVERWHELMING
GOOD SENSE IN REJECTING EXTREMES OF LEFT AND RIGHT THAT IT
WOULD HAVE AN EFFECT. SPECIFICALLY, CUNHA CITED THREE
POSITIVE RESULTS OF THE ELECTIONS: (A) THE VOTE CONFIRMED
THE LEGITIMACY OF THE PRESENT COALITION, AND EMPHASIZED THE
SOCIALIST POPULAR DEMOCRAT PREDOMINANCE; (B) THE VOTE
EXPOSED THE MDP AS A NON-PARTY; (C) THE VOTE DEMONSTRATED
THAT THERE WAS AN ABSOLUTE BARRIER OF ABOUT 15 PERCENT
THAT THE COMMUNISTS COULD NOT CROSS.

3. EXPANDING ON LAST POINT, CUNHA SAID THAT THE
COMMUNISTS HAD BEEN CAMPAIGNING UNDER THE MOST FAVORABLE
CONDITIONS IMAGINABLE AND, IN SPITE OF THIS, HAD BEEN
REJECTED BY A MASSIVE MAJORITY OF THE PORTUGUESE PEOPLE.
HE ADDED THAT THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL'S POST-ELECTION
ANALYSES HAD SHOWN THAT VOTERS INDEED SHIFTED FROM THE
CDS TO THE PPD AND TO THE PS. BUT THOSE WHO HAD NOT BEEN
PREVIOUSLY COMMITTED DID NOT MAKE THE LEAP TO THE COMMUNIST
PARTY. THIS WAS AN IMPORTANT POINT FOR HIM, AND CUNHA
STATED REPEATEDLY THAT THE ELECTION LESSON WOULD BE LEARNED
IN TIME. WHEN I ASKED CUNHA WHETHER THE PRESIDENT SHARED
HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE ELECTION, HE INDICATED A STRONG
AFFIRMATIVE BY RHETORICALLY INQUIRING WHETHER I HAD NOT
READ THE PRESIDENT'S MAY DAY SPEECH (WHICH DWELT HEAVILY
ON THE ELECTION OUTCOME).

4. I ASKED CUNHA WHY HE WAS PLEASED THAT THE MDP WAS
SHOWN TO BE A HOLLOW SHELL AND, AT THE SAME TIME,
PLEASED THAT THE PRESENT COALITION WAS CONFIRMED WITH
THE MDP IN IT. HOW DID HE SQUARE THIS? HE REPLIED THAT
THE CONTRADICTION WAS MORE APPARENT THAN REAL IF THE TIME
FACTOR WAS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT. CONFIRMING THE COALITION
WAS A SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVE AND SERVED TO LEGITIMIZE THE
PARTIES, ESPECIALLY THE BIG ONES. EXPOSING THE MDP AND
LESSENING ITS INFLUENCE WOULD TAKE MORE TIME BUT,
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HE SAID, WAS ALREADY HAPPENING. CUNHA SAID THAT IN PROVINCIAL
CITIES AND TOWNS SOMETHING LIKE A SPONTANEOUS SOCIALIST
TAKEOVER WAS BEGINNING TO OCCUR IN THE WAKE OF THE ELECTION.
MANY OF THE TOWNS HAD COME UNDER MDP CONTROL IN THE IMMEDIATE
AFTERMATH OF THE APRIL 25 COUP. BUT THIS WAS CHANGING
AND WOULD HAVE ITS EFFECT ON LISBON.

5. MAY DAY TROUBLES: ACCORDING TO CUNHA, BARRING THE

SOCIALIST LEADERS FROM THE MAY DAY RALLY (REFTELS) WAS AN "OBVIOUS PROVOCATION" BY THE COMMUNISTS AND OTHER

ALLIES IN INTERSINDICAL. HE SAID CUNHAL HAD OVERPLAYED HIS HAND IN AN ATTEMPT TO RECOUP FROM HIS POOR ELECTION SHOWING, BUT HAD THEREBY SHOWN WHAT DEMOCRACY MEANS TO THE PCP. I ASKED CUNHA WHETHER THIS VIEW WAS SHARED BY HIS MILITARY COLLEAGUES, PARTICULARLY THOSE ON THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL. HE ANSWERED THAT MANY OF THEM FELT THAT WAY, BUT DID NOT EXPAND.

6. UNITARY LABOR LAW: CUNHA SAID THAT PART OF THE REASON FOR THE COMMUNIST/INTERINDICAL CONFRONTATION WITH THE SOCIALISTS ON MAY DAY WAS THAT THE UNITARY LABOR LAW, AS PROMULGATED, STILL CALLS FOR UNION ELECTIONS AND ALLOWS FOR AN OVERALL REVIEW AFTER ONE YEAR. BELIEVING THAT THE SOCIALISTS WILL WIN THESE UNION ELECTIONS, INTERINDICAL SOUGHT TO HAVE THIS PROVISION EXPUNGED AT THE LAST MOMENT; BUT THEY DID NOT SUCCEED.

7. AFM-SOCIALIST RELATIONS: I ASKED CUNHA HOW HE SAW THE FUTURE OF SOCIALIST-AFM RELATIONS. HE WAS LESS OPTIMISTIC IN THIS SPHERE. HE NOTED THAT PERSONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE MAJOR SOCIALIST LEADERS AND SOME MILITARY LEADERS WERE NOT GOOD, AND COMMENTED THAT WHAT WAS NEEDED NOW FROM THE PS WERE PROPOSALS NOT JUST REACTIONS.

8. ANGOLA: SEPTTEL.

9. COMMENT: FERREIRA DA CUNHA'S GENERALLY UPBEAT VIEW OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IS THAT OF A MILITARY MODERATE, AND SHOULD BE READ WITH THAT IN MIND.
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